NEWS RELEASE

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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT HELPS WOMEN PURSUE CAREERS IN SKILLED TRADES

Giving Low-Income Women The Skills They Need For Economic Independence

GUELPH – The McGuinty government is investing $1.5 million to provide pre-apprenticeship training in the skilled trades for low-income women who are unemployed or underemployed, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues Sandra Pupatello announced today.

"This funding means low-income women will get the training they need to pursue rewarding careers in a high-growth sector," said Pupatello. "The Women in Skilled Trades program gives women the opportunity to become economically independent and to contribute to Ontario's economy."

This investment will help seven training facilities to deliver pre-apprenticeship training for up to 145 women. The women will receive instruction in carpentry, welding, electrical work, building construction, and facilities maintenance. Training will be delivered at facilities in Barrie, Burlington, Waterloo, Kenora, Ottawa and Fort Frances.

"The government's continuing support for the Women in Skilled Trades program is very welcome on two counts," said Conestoga College President John Tibbits. "First, it makes possible excellent opportunities and rewarding career choices for women in the skilled trades. Second, it calls attention to the importance of trades and apprenticeship education, and highlights the need to expand participation in this area."

Including this year's enrolment, approximately 650 women will have been given the opportunity to enter a pre-apprenticeship training program. The government is committed to increasing the number of overall apprenticeship registrations by 7,000 to a total of 26,000 annually in 2007-08.

A new One-Stop Training and Employment System will help ensure this increase in registrations by providing a clear pathway into apprenticeship, increasing the focus on employer outreach and recruitment, as well as improving apprenticeship completion rates.

Other McGuinty government initiatives to provide opportunities include:

- Increasing the minimum wage twice to $7.75
- Expanding academic upgrading options for people who leave high school early
- Expanding the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and the Pre-apprenticeship Program.

The Women in Skilled Trades program has been a resounding success across Ontario, and I am confident that it will continue to be," said Pupatello. "The McGuinty government is determined to give women the opportunity to learn the skills they need to secure good jobs and help build strong communities."

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